

# Steal This Hook!

## Stealing the Crown Jewels

By Robert Wiese



Scoundrels are not always thieves, but thieves are usually always scoundrels. Whether they are the elite cat burglars that steal high-end valuables or the second-story men and women who steal whatever they can carry, or the footpads that hold up people in alleys, thieves hold a somewhat romantic place in cultural thought. Like pirates, they don't deserve it. This month, we hook your PCs into adventures involving thieves and thefts.

### Bring Me Pretties, My Minions -- *Eberron*

Fairhaven, the capital of Aundair, is one of the most active and cosmopolitan cities in all of Khorvaire. Only Sharn and a few others rival it. In this massive metropolis, almost anything can happen. With a thriving underworld, the royal government of Aundair, a university on the rebound, dragonmarked enclaves, and merchant powers, the possibilities are endless.

One day, when the PCs are meeting with a business contact, authorities come to arrest the business contact for theft. The business contact claims innocence and can provide an alibi (that cannot be confirmed). Inquiry under a *zone of truth* spell shows that the accused really remembers being somewhere else at the time of the theft. An eyewitness, however, places the accused at the scene of the crime at the time of the theft. The accused believes he (or she) is being framed and railroaded for some business reason, and asks for help.



### d100 Motivations

01-40 The business contact is sincere and needs help, and he or she hides nothing from the PCs.

41-90 The business contact made the Will save against the *modify memory* (if that complication is used), and remembers what happened (and made the save for the *zone of truth*, too). The business contact is afraid to say anything for fear of being killed, and it takes a lot of convincing or magical probing to reveal what this person knows.

91-00 The business contact is the bard mastermind behind the crimes, and he or she is allaying any future suspicion by setting

### Campaign Adaptation

Enchanters exist in any **D&D** campaign world, so this hook works in any campaign. [Complete Adventurer](#) may help you flesh out the bard, and [Spell Compendium](#) can give you new and cool spell options.

**Forgotten Realms:** This seems very much like a Thayan plot, so you could set it somewhere near a Thayan enclave and have the mastermind be part of the enclave.

himself or herself up as a victim.

## d100 Complications

00-45 The mastermind behind the crimes is a bard enchanter who uses *dominate person* to have other innocents commit thefts that would be easy for them, and then uses *modify memory* to remove the memory of the crime and substitute another.

46-60 This is not the first crime, and other "minions" with modified memories live in the cities. The PCs have to find some of them to piece together enough information to find the mastermind.

61-65 The mastermind bard is a friend of the PCs -- perhaps a contact from a past adventure. He or she has been very helpful to them, such that they would be unwilling to believe the bard could be behind the crimes.

66-75 The bard is being controlled or forced by another person or creature (perhaps a vampire or the ghost of a relative) to have these crimes committed. If the bard is eliminated, the crimes stop only for a short time while the real mastermind finds another pawn.

76-90 The crimes are being perpetrated by doppelgangers or changelings, and the business contact really was not at the crime scene. Proving that could be very difficult seeing as he or she cannot prove the alibi.

91-00 The whole crime spree is a ruse to draw in the PCs. The bard mastermind is a pleasure devil in disguise and wants to corrupt the PC cleric. Devils committed the thefts, and they designed every step of the investigation to lead the PC cleric or paladin down a path of spiritual corruption.

**Generic:** Hey, this one goes anywhere there are people with magic.

**d20 Modern:** In a **d20 Modern** setting, this might be more fun in a less populated area such as a large town in the American Midwest. It would also work well on a frontier space station around some distant planet in a **d20 Future** campaign.

## Quick, Duck in Here -- Eberron

Sharn, the City of Towers, is more than it appears in many ways. Layer upon layer of the city reach from the shores of the Dagger River up to the skies above the thousand-foot cliffs against which the city rests. In addition, magical rooms exist within towers, and more than one wizard (or powerful person with a wizard henchperson) maintains a more or less permanent *magnificent mansion* (known in Greyhawk as a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*) with access to walkways or gardens in the better parts of the city.

Morgrave University received a unique package from a group of commissioned explorers the night before last via House Orien fast transport means. The next night, as the PCs leave a tavern or other such nighttime entertainment business, they see a group of people running through the streets carrying something covered in a tarp. It looks large and heavy. They run up (or down) two levels and then into a garden, and stop in the middle of a walkway. One of them makes some gestures and a faint shimmer appears in the air (visible in the light of a *continual flame* sculpture nearby). The people all run through the shimmer and disappear. So does the shimmer. Seconds later, cries of "Thief!!" ring out across the city, and booted footsteps move toward the garden (actually, they go everywhere).

## d100 Motivations

00-60 Morgrave University is horrified and upset at the loss of the

artifact. They want it back and provide all the help they can.

61-85 Scholars at Morgrave determined that the artifact has magical powers that no one should know about, and they are very cagey about what the artifact is, where it came from, or what it does. They do want it back, though.

86-95 One of the scholars at Morgrave University arranged the theft and is connected to the owner of the *magnificent mansion* where the thieves hid.

96-00 The artifact carries a curse, and a demon or devil has replaced one of the scholars working on the device. That demon wants the artifact because it can help release demons from Khyber. It could be a fiend possessing a scholar or a fiend that has killed and impersonated a scholar.

## d100 Complications

00-25 The owner of the *magnificent mansion* is behind the theft, and she has allowed the thieves access to it. The thieves actually plan to form a great guild of thieves that use the *mansion* as a base (woe to them if someone dispels it).

26-55 The master thief used Use Magic Device to activate someone else's *magnificent mansion*, effectively stealing the *mansion* too. The *mansion* within is large enough that the thieves and the real owners don't run into each other (indeed, the real owner is rarely there).

56-70 The artifact is stored in the *mansion*, and the creator cannot be found, so the PCs have to break into the *magnificent mansion* to recover the artifact.

71-90 The *mansion* has a flaw: a rift into another plane. Monsters from that plane are getting into the *mansion* and will find their way into the city soon enough. The theft is not the only problem the PCs face.

91-00 The *magnificent mansion* has an unusual trait: It opens into some odd places and includes an exit to the world of Greyhawk.

## Campaign Adaptation

You could choose to design a mansion that connects different campaign worlds. Thus, the thieves could be operating on different campaign worlds at the same time, and pursuers from the Forgotten Realms could be looking for a different valuable than those on Eberron. [Cityscape](#) may help flesh out the world outside the magnificent mansion, and [Dungeonscape](#) (due out in February) could really help you create the internal world of the mansion. Don't forget the servants.

**Forgotten Realms:** Waterdeep, Athkatla in Amn, anywhere in Thay, or Skuld in Mulhorand are good locations for this adventure.

**Generic:** Large trading centers are the most likely locations for this adventure, but powerful wizards that like to show off their magic are also needed to create the *magnificent mansion* (plus any tweaks to the effect you wish to introduce). Pick a large city where wizards live. You probably have one.

**d20 Modern:** The *magnificent mansion* is a magical construction unheard-of in the **d20 Modern** setting, where no one can cast the spell required to make one. Thus, there must be a wizard from a fantasy world involved -- one who knows spells beyond what normal magic in **d20 Modern** allows. Such a person could live anywhere, but probably lives in London, New York, or Shanghai, where he or she can get "lost in the crowd."

## Hands in the Cookie Jar -- *Forgotten Realms*

Suzail, capital of Cormyr, is one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the entire Realms, and it serves as the home of Cormyrean royalty. As one



might expect, it is also the home (sometimes, anyway) of the crown jewels. Most kings have crown jewels, after all. They are a mark of status. They are also well guarded. However, in a world that includes both innovative criminals and magic, no security is good enough.

One morning, rumors begin to circulate that the crown jewels are missing. No one knows anything, but everyone is willing to speculate and make up things that sound good. Later in the morning, and over the next several days, people begin asking questions. Not all of these people wear the uniforms of law enforcement. Everyone feels the heat, including the PCs, who are in town between adventures. Eventually, someone is arrested. That is when the adventure hits home for the PCs.



## d100 Motivations

00-30 The royal family wants the jewels back as quickly as possible, and they don't care what happens to the thieves. This could lead to quick "vigilante" justice or to the thieves being able to work a deal.

31-50 The royal family wants vengeance on the thieves more than they want the jewels back. They can always replace jewels, but they must show the world that they won't tolerate thieves.

51-75 A member of the royal family is behind the thefts in some way, and he wants the crime blamed on scapegoats so that the questions die down and the jewels are not recovered.

76-00 Rivals of the royal family want to use the theft as a destabilizing incident, though that is difficult with the popular family of late King Azoun IV. Nonetheless, these rivals try to make an incident of it.

## d100 Complications

00-40 The PCs are the ones arrested, or some of the more roguish ones are taken into custody. The PCs are innocent, but the real thieves planted enough evidence to lay the blame on "foreigner adventurers." The PCs not arrested have to solve the case.

41-55 The PCs really did commit the crime. You may have to give them a motivation for doing so that fits their morals, and then

## Campaign Adaptation

This kind of adventure can take place anywhere there are crown jewels to be stolen. You could take advantage of the material in [Cityscape](#), but then again you might want to use [Races of the Wild](#), [Races of Stone](#), or some world-specific publication instead.

**Eberron:** Since all of the Five Nations are ruled by descendents of the Galifar kings, all are royalty and would have crown jewels somewhere. Pick your favorite among the Five Nations. I like Thrane and Aundair.

**Generic:** You need a country with some crown jewels, though the rulers don't have to be royalty. A merchant ruler without a title could have crown jewels of some kind too. A large city setting is ideal for this adventure -- usually the largest in the campaign region works best.

**d20 Modern:** Of course London is the most obvious choice for this adventure. Where else has so much been told about the Crown Jewels? Heck, there was an episode of the old Batman TV series that



again you may not. In either case, have the adventure start with the theft and proceed to the investigation. The PCs may have to turn themselves in, or lay the blame on someone else, or just leave town and not come back. If this won't work with your group of player characters, feel free to try another result.

had the Crown Jewels as the main target of the villains.

56-85 Someone on the shady side of the law thinks the PCs are involved and begins pressuring them (in classic film style; see *The Maltese Falcon* for ideas) to turn the jewels over. Whether the PCs have the jewels or not is not relevant.

86-00 The theft was the "final exam" of some thieves from Night Masks from Westgate who are under new leadership. As part of their disguise, they magically took on the appearances of one or more of the PCs, having determined that the PCs are "traveling through" and therefore likely to be gone soon.

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## About the Author

**Robert Wiese** Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and year-old son Owen.

Over the course of his career, he wrote over sixty tournament adventures for the **RPGA**, and he continues to inflict his creativity on you through this website. He hopes that you find his little creations useful, or at least amusing.